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ABSTRACT

This syllabus for a course on community organizations and information transfer provides outlines for these topics: (1) a review of research on community development; (2) identification of organizations in relation to their information environment; (3) information seeking and use behavior of organizations; (4) information seeking and use behavior of individuals in organizations; (5) characteristics and potential information processes in organizations; (6) information resources and media used by organizations; (7) the rise of mass information utilities; (8) interaction of community information services with information systems; (9) examples of problem-focused research and information services; (10) selected problems in community information services; and (11) the gap between research and field practice. A section of selected readings and references includes bibliographies on organization theory, community action, role of information in the social and political process, community information services, and implications for the library and information professions, as well as examples of organizations, reference and referral sources, indexing and abstracting services, and studies on Syracuse, N.Y. (AWP)

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COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

AND

INFORMATION TRANSFER

Marta L. Dosa

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1976 - 1977

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SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LIBRARY SCIENCE

L. S. 620 M. Dosa
Advanced Topics in Information Resources and Systems 1976/77

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND INFORMATION

I. THE THEORETICAL BASIC: REVIEW OF RESEARCH ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, ORGANIZATION THEORY, DECISION MAKING, AND RELATED FIELDS.

Relevant work in sociology, social psychology, political science, communication theory, cultural anthropology, education and social work, introduced through the views of selected representatives of the literature. Their relatives for information needs and services.

Topics may include: Organizational behavior, changes in organizational forms; individual behavior in organizations; interpersonal and intergroup relations; conflict resolution; the ecological basis of community like; theories of planning and decision making; social movements; leadership theories; planned and non-directed change; responsive bureaucracy; intergovernmental relations; public accountability; role theory, etc.

Special emphasis onORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION: Formal and informal channels, barriers to communication, evaluation of the effectiveness of communication, etc.

II. THE EMPIRICAL BASIS: IDENTIFICATION OF TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENCIES IN RELATION TO THEIR INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

Definitions (Community; community development, community organization, etc.)

Socio-economic aspects of organizations

Relationship to the community and to society at large

Organizational interest-profile, described in terms of clientele, membership, services, objectives, professional and technical skills.

Communication behavior as it related to information seeking and use or non-use

Internal information channels (staff use)

External information channels (client use)

Existing and potential information services ans systems

- Relationship to management
- Relationship to membership or clientele
- Relationship to the community
- Relationship to local libraries

Media and technologies currently used

Problems of performance; planning for the future

III. INFORMATION SEEKING AND USE BEHAVIOR OF ORGANIZATIONS

The influence of institutional goals and limitations

The influence of tradition, institutional and individual habits; prejudices; the role of leadership; the relation of change agents to the leadership

The effect of information on organizational creativity/ productivity/ innovation - or passivity/ stagnation/ failure

Multidisciplinary aspects of information; impact on the community

Legal and regulatory problems

Behavioral factors which influence information use: Motivation, involvement, commitment, self-interest, social interest, responsiveness to a situation, etc.

Environmental factors which influence information use: Economic level, educational levle, relationship to work ease of access, time, form of information, etc.

ATTEMPT AT A CLASSIFICATION OF INFORMATION ENVIRONMENTS:

1. Institutional profiles

   Governmental
   Educational
   Service-oriented
   Church-affiliated
   Recreational
   Cultural/civic

2. Problem-focused organizations:

   Business/marketing
   Consumer protection
   Crime control/ correctional
   Environmental
   Gerontology/geriatrics
   Health care and delivery
   Historical
   Legal
   Performing arts
   Social service delivery

3. Location-oriented organizations:

   Neighborhood action groups
   Inner-city centers
   Rural organizations
   Suburban organizations

4. Organizations and agencies directly involved with information

Citizen Reference Centers
Information Centers
Libraries
Citizens' Advice Bureaus (British)
Advocacy groups

IV. INFORMATION SEEKING ANS USE BEHAVIOR OF INDIVIDUALS IN ORGANIZATIONS

Various roles played by individuals in various information seeking situations

The effect of intergroup and interpersonal relations

The use of information as weapon/tool/disguise/stepping-stone/argument/self-improvement/propaganda

ATTEMPT AT A CLASSIFICATION OF INFORMATION USERS

1. Users of data, research, professional, technical information

2. Planners, policy makers, decision makers, management

3. Developers, policy enforcers, middle-management

4. Participating and potential publics

5. Specialized user groups

P/R personnel
Local press
Case workers
Legal counselors
Technical personnel
Promoters
Supporting services

V. CHARACTERISTIC AND POTENTIAL INFORMATION PROCESSES IN ORGANIZATIONS

Information related to the life-cycle of organizations:

A) Birth of an organization;

B) Integration into the community

C) Day-by-day function

Archives
Research and technical data
Internal communication
Vertical — Written
Horizontal — Verbal
Non-verbal

Public information

Special processes:

Identification and collection (of information)
Organization
Retrieval
Interpretation, repackaging
Filtering/screening
Counseling
Dissemination
Referral

D) Defunct organizations

Dead files
Lost files
Migration of files
Migration of expertise

Comparative study of information services of libraries and other institutions and agencies

Evaluation and measurement of information services and community feedback

VI. INFORMATION RESOURCES AND MEDIA USED BY ORGANIZATIONS

A) Human Resources

Individual expertise
Disciplinary knowledge and memory
Professional knowledge and skill
Memos and correspondence

Telephone, etc. communication
Research-in-grogress reports
The grapevine
Information resource people

B) Institutional resources

Instutional expertise
Short-term projects and programs
Visiting experts, consultants
Inter-agency cooperative projects and programs
Regional programs
Problem-focused programs
Conferences, symposia, meetings
Workshops, training programs, in-service training

C) Media

Instutional archives
In-house, processed materials
Print and non-print
Institutional publishing
Special forms
Use of mass media
CTV

VII. THE RISE OF MASS INFORMATION UTILITIES

Consideration of the total approach to community information

"Community planning," "Community development" and "community organization" vs. individual agencies and organizations

The relevance of general systems theory and research

Networks

Model CIU (Community Information Utility)

Municipal services
Educational and library services
Industrial and vocational services
Entertainment and news services
Public participation (e.g. voting)
Potential relationships of traditional community information services to the emerging CIUs
Aspects of change and innovation: The economy, the law, the consumers, the educational system, the press, the churches, the family.

VIII. INTERACTION OF COMMUNITY INFORMATION SERVICES WITH INFORMATION SYSTEMS AT THE REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND SUPRA-NATIONAL LEVELS

Regional and national organizations for community planning and development

International organization for community planning and development

Public policy and the sponsorship of community development

Organizational isolation

Barriers of interaction: Nationality, race, language, tradition, economic and technological levels, value systems, etc.

IX. EXAMPLES OF PROBLEM-FOCUSED RESEARCH AND INFORMATION SERVICES

Aging	Housing
Citizen participation	Human rights
Child care	Land use
Citizen action	Legal rights
Communications	Mental health
Consumerism	Political rights
Crime	Prisons
Drug abuse	Public health
Employment	Transportation
Environment	Youth
Funding	

X. SELECTED PROBLEMS IN COMMUNITY INFORMATION SERVICES

Citizen participation/governmental and industrial restrictions

Consumerism

Acceptance of/ resistance to change and innovation

Individual privacy/ large data banks

The role of volunteers in organizational life

Labor relations/ unions

Planning for creative leisure

Information for the unemployed

Grantsmanship/ fund raising/ PR

Copyright/ public sponsorship/ institutional publishing

Service agencies and problems of public transportation

"Underground" and counter-culture organizations; their role in the community and society

Ethno-cultural aspects of information needs

Socio-economic characteristics of community organizations

Direct-response advertising as a community information source

Community planning agencies

Crime-control and information

XI. THE GAP BETWEEN RESEARCH AND THE FIELD OF PRACTICE

Evaluation of the relationship between available research data and current practice in relation to a selected community problem

Are organizations aware of the alternatives?

Are their clients/members aware of the alternatives?

Does the public have access to information on current services and possible alternatives?

COMMUNITY INFORMATION PROJECTS

The class will explore a variety of roles a community information specialist may play. Some of these roles (functions) require a combination of approaches of librarianship and social casework. Each member of the class will select a community problem, e.g., day-care centers. The methodology may include some or all of the following phases:

1) Data gathering and bibliographic function. A literature search will attempt to identify new trends and advances in the field, and alternatives in solving current problems. Interviews with experts in the field will seek opinions and information on emerging plans.

2) Resource guidance function. Turning to the community, the student will try to assess the availability of services and facilities, e.g., operating day-care centers. He will compile his own resource guide or directory.

3) Case-work function. Through interviews with service personnel and citizens in need of services, the student may evaluate (a) the information needs of a selected agency, (b) the information output of that agency and its impact on the community.

4) Counseling function. On the basis of a case study of this agency, an attempt will be made to identify problems caused by lack of information (or information overload).

Selected Reading and Reference

Background Reading on Organization Theory and Related Concepts

Background Reading on Community Action

The Role of Information in the Social and Political Process

Community Information Services (Applications)

Implications for the Library and Information Professions

Examples of Organizations

Reference and Referral Sources

Indexing and Abstracting Services

Studies on Syracuse, N. Y.

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EXAMPLES OF ORGANIZATIONS

American Rehabilitation Foundataion, 123 East Grant St., Minneapolis, Minn. 55403

Clearinghouse for Sociological Literature. Dept. of Sociology, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois 60115

Community Council of Greater New York Information Bureau and Contributors Information Bureau, 225 Park Avenue South, New York, N. Y. 10003

Community Development Foundation, 345 E. 46th Street, New York, N. Y. 10017.

Council of Planning Librarians, P. O. Box 229, Monticello, Illinois 61856.

Institute for Community Studies, 301 East Arman Bldg., Kansas City, Missouri, 64111

National Association of Counties, 1735 New York Ave. N.W., Washington, D. C. 20006

National League of Cities
and
United States Conference of Mayors, 1620 Eye St., N. W., Washington, D. C. 20006

National League of Cities Urban Observatory Network, Urban Research and Metropolitan Community Service Project, 1612 K Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.

Public Administration Service, 1313 East 60th St., Chicago, Ill. 60637

Public Utility, Inc. 9federally subsidized organization for assisting smaller cities to obtain and utilize information to cope with their problems)

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